



A Matter of Trust: Local Communities and Energy Decision-Making

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Positive Energy

A Research and Engagement Programme at uOttawa's Institute for Science, Society and Policy

- **Mandate:** to strengthen public confidence in Canadian energy policy, regulation and decision-making through evidence-based research and analysis, engagement and recommendations for action
- **Approach:** uses the convening power of the university to bring together industry, government, Indigenous leaders, ENGOs and academia; solution-focused research

Three-Year Projects

- **PE-I (2015-2018):** Public Confidence in Energy Decisions
- **PE-II (2018-2021):** Canada's Energy Future in an Age of Climate Change

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Financial supporters to date

AB Energy, AER, BCOGC, BCUC, CanWEA, CAPP, CEA, CEPA, CGA, CNSC, CRIN, Cenovus, Encana, NRCan, SSHRC

Advisory Council

Funding orgs + Indigenous/ENGO/academic/thought leaders

Research collaborators to date

Canada West, Ivey School & profs from Clarkson, Mount Royal, Queen's, UdeM, UofR, UofT, UVic, Oregon State

The research team: 6 faculty, 2 senior fellows, 1 research associate, 1 artist, 2 postdocs, 5 grad/undergrad students

Polling, Media and Event Partners to date

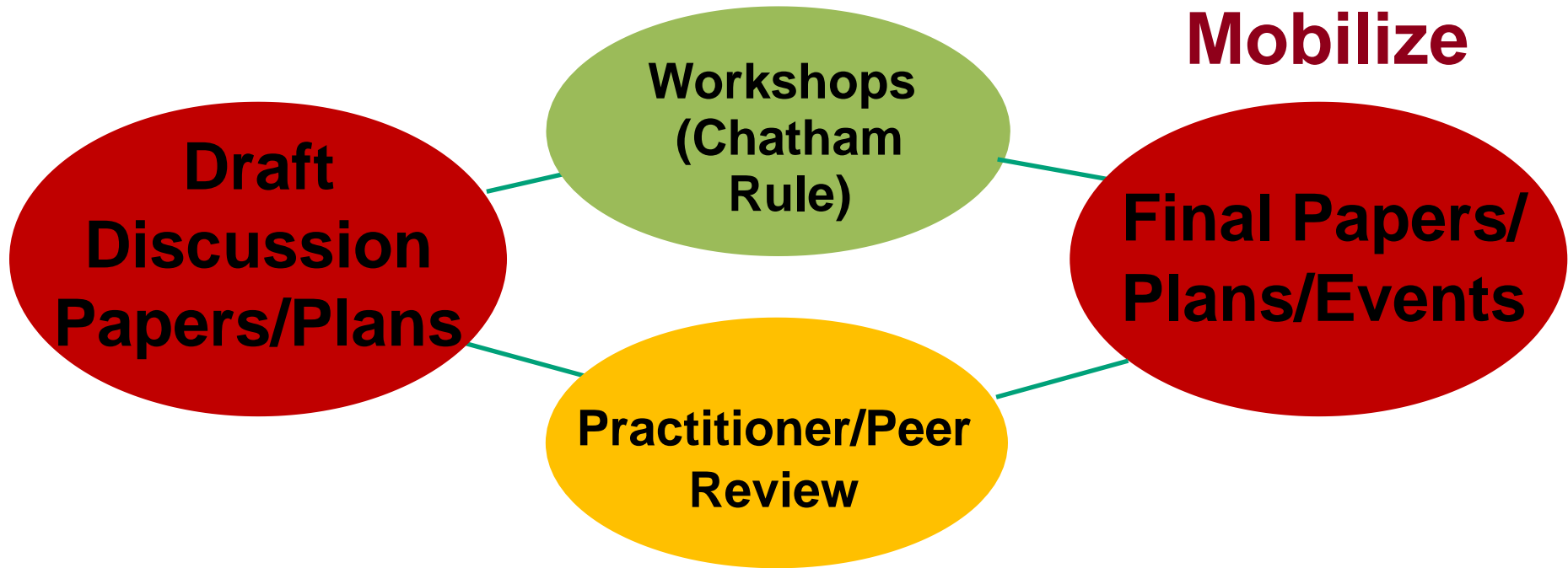
Nanos Research, The Globe and Mail, Economic Club

Research & Engagement Design

**Propose
& Frame**

Convene

**Refine &
Disseminate/
Mobilize**



Ongoing Engagement

With policymakers

Energy & Mines Ministers Conferences 2015, 2016, 2020;
Generation Energy, briefings to ministers, DMs, exec teams

With regulators

CAMPUT, presentations to regulatory agency staff/boards

With legislators

Parliamentary Committees

With industry

Trade association/company boards, members, staff, confs

With civil society

Indigenous organizations, ENGOS, general public, think tanks

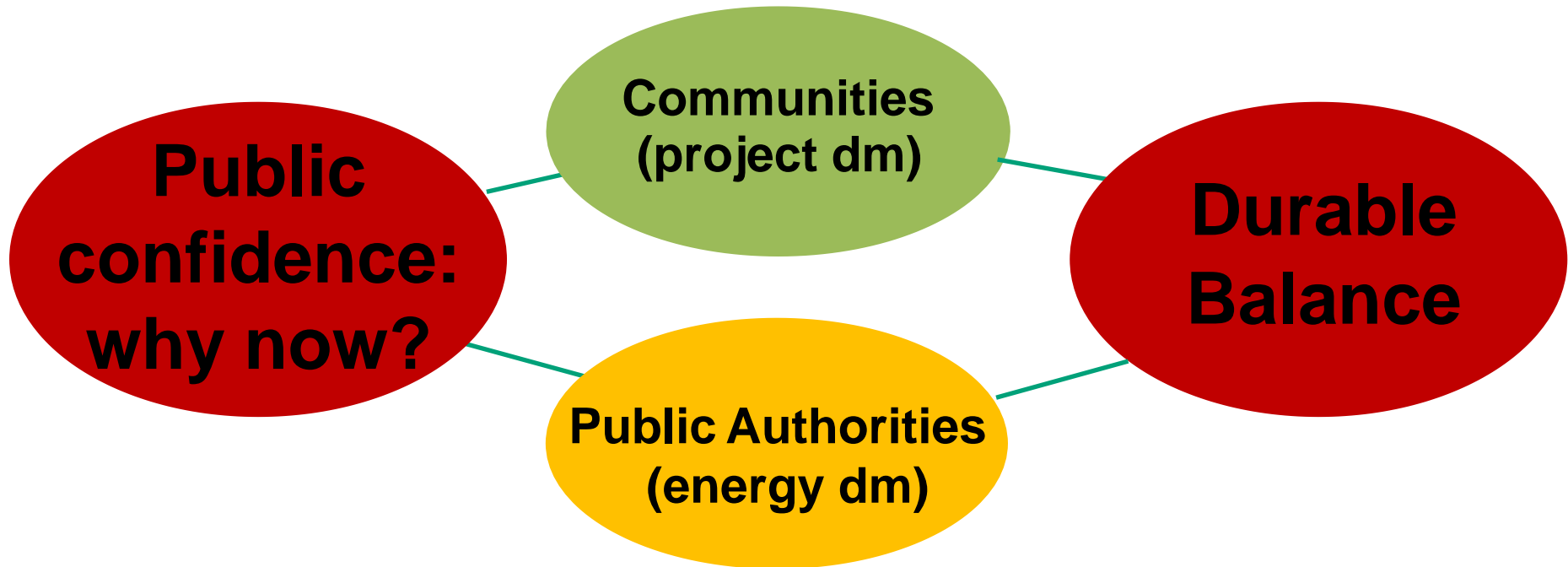
With media

PE-I: Public Confidence

Define the problem

Research Streams

Synthesize Findings



PE-II: Canada's Energy Future

Polarization

How can public authorities address/navigate/work through polarization ?

Roles & Responsibilities

How to strengthen relationships between policymakers/regulators/courts/Indigenous govts/cities?

Consensus-Building

What are the models of and limits to consensus-building?

The Communities Project

Collaboration with the Canada West Foundation

Six case studies of energy projects across the country

Northern Gateway (Kitimat/Haisla, BC), Western Alberta Transmission Line (Rimbey/Eckville AB), Wuskwatim hydro dam (NCN, MB), Gas plants (King City/Oakville ON), Windmills (St-Valentin QC), Shale gas (Kent County/Elsipogtog NB)

Finding drivers of satisfaction (or not) with decision-making

Findings published in various reports

A Matter of Trust (synthesis report)

Individual reports for each case (available [here](#))

Fair Enough (interim report) and

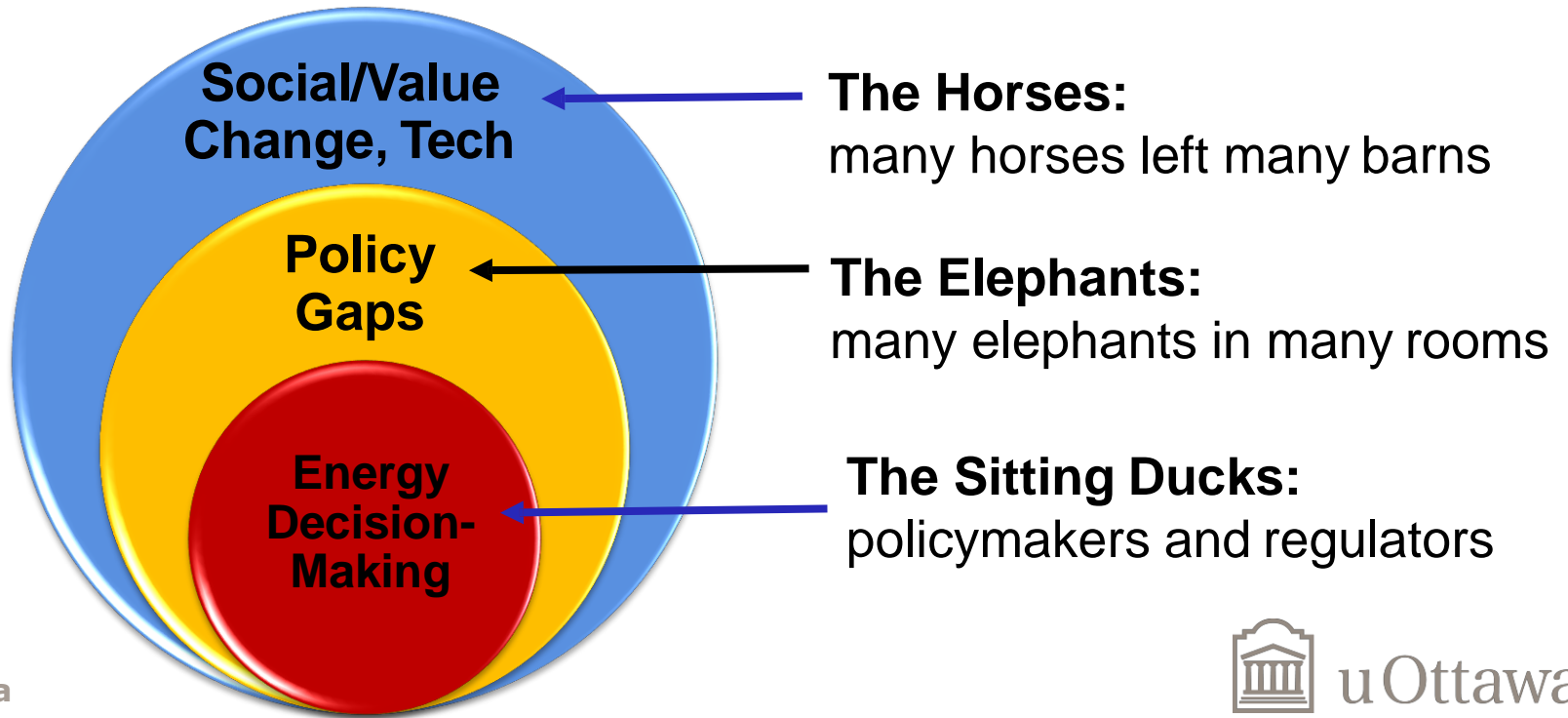
Communities in Perspective (literature review)

Lessons to date from Positive Energy for community trust and energy decision-making

Understand the contemporary decision-making context

Lesson 1

Trust is influenced by factors well beyond an individual project



The Horses: Social/Value/Tech Change

Fundamental changes in postwar period

1. Decline of trust
2. Democratization of decision-making
3. Decline of deference
4. Increasing preoccupation with risk
5. From group to individual values
6. Critique of big business
7. Technological change, especially social media

Lesson 2

Accept the horses



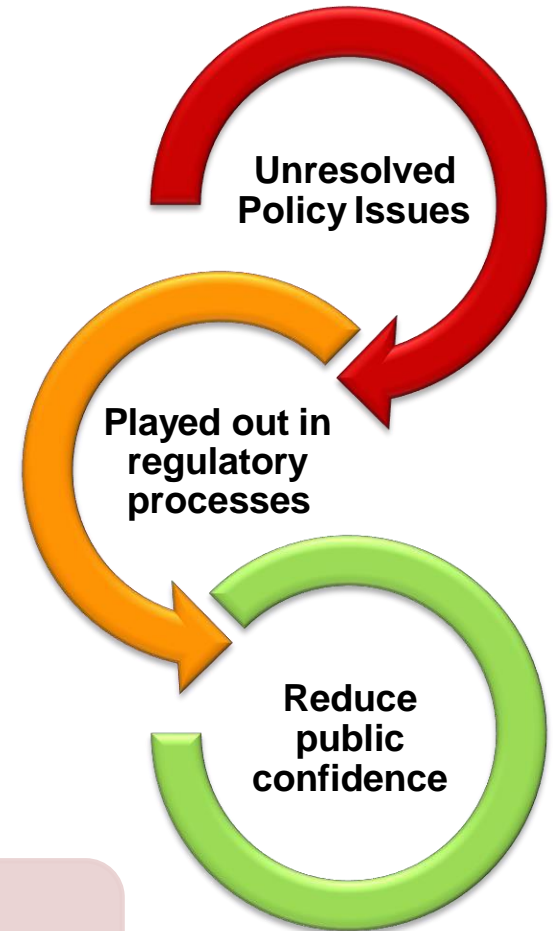
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The Elephants: Policy Gaps

Four key gaps

1. Climate change
2. Indigenous concerns / Reconciliation
3. Cumulative effects
4. National energy vision

Often play out in regulatory processes for individual projects



Lesson

3

Befriend the elephants



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The Sitting Ducks

Policymakers & especially regulators

1. Skepticism re balance/legitimacy of govt decisions
2. Less traction for appeals to the national/provincial interest
3. Lack of confidence in expert opinion/evidence
4. Tension: participatory & representative democracy
5. Preference for small-scale locally owned projects
6. Perceptions of risk can trump realities of risk

Lesson

4

Help the sitting ducks get back on their feet



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Understand Communities

Lesson 5

Facts: a necessary but insufficient condition

- Information needs to be available, credible, adequate and timely, but energy literacy is rarely the issue

Lesson 6

Context matters

- Understand comm'y history, values and interests – framing matters!
- Local env'tal impacts often trump climate

Understand Communities

Lesson 7

Real early engagement (build time/cost in)

- Build a trusting relationship: listen then speak
- The fix cannot be in: co-develop if possible

Lesson 8

Communities will take risks, but need to see benefits (fairness)

- Understand how project can advance things people care about

Carefully Navigate a Complex Dynamic Environment

Lesson 9

Projects can go sideways at any time – be ready

- Who will stand up for you when the chips are down?

Lesson 10

Your greatest asset isn't your technology – it's community relationships

- Take the time to build and maintain them

Lesson 11

Governments may not attend to the elephants, horses and ducks

- Long-term planning clashes with short-term polarized politics
- Recognize what you do (and don't) have control over

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